## **Visual Merchandising Checklist**

1. Does your storefront make a simple yet powerful statement? A quick glance should tell you what the merchandise is about, what type of merchandise you carry, or the services provided.

Try designing an inviting entrance to make customers feel welcome and to encourage casual passers-by to enter. Make sure your entrance is not too cluttered and customers are able to enter easily with strollers, coats, and packages.

Also, be sure that window displays are creative enough to attract shoppers' attention.

- 2. Does your merchandise make a color statement? Pull together a display with a single, dominant color.
- 3. Have focal areas been created? Group together collections that will create and maintain the consumer's interest. For example, a display could contain varied items that all have the same color, or the merchandise could have a particular theme such as bird watching. "The longer a customer looks at a display, the more time they'll have to think of reasons to purchase the items," consultant Barbara Wold says.

"Be sure to provide sufficient display space. It's natural to want to display the maximum amount of merchandise. However, if customers can't focus on individual products because of visual clutter, they will leave frustrated and empty-handed."

**4. Have you mass-merchandised effectively?** Maximize your mass displays by angling, stacking, patterning, and using color. For instance, "Take a sample out of the box and display the price. Most people secretly suspect that anything not visibly priced is beyond their price range. So they don't ask – and don't buy," she says.

5. Have you romanced your merchandise?

Merchandise should be embellished with tender loving care. Get merchandise off the floor and display it at eye level where it will sell better. If you sell clothing, steam it; if you sell glassware, get out your Windex; if you sell lamps, plug them in.

## 6. Does your store encourage activity?

Displays should lend themselves to action. "For example, set the mood with music. When every footstep or cough echoes, people feel ill at ease. Soft, relaxing music provides a protective background and encourages a longer visit. If you sell music, play the music you have in stock – it's a great selling tool. A 'Now Playing' sign

will help customers buy what they hear." Wold explains.

Entertain customers with in-store demonstrations, taste testing, live music, and refreshments. Make sure your staff moves around the store, mingling with customers and not standing at the cash counter.

"You want customers to feel free to handle the merchandise, so create displays that are touchable. Offer customers a shopping basket – for their ease and to fill up with merchandise. Have a stack at the front door, as well as in the middle of the store," she suggests.

**7. Is the customer aware of your merchandise and your services?** Visually let your customers know about the conveniences and services offered within the store.

"Prominently display the name of the store behind the counter and list the services you offer, such as upcoming events, gift certificates, special orders, gift registry, U.P.S. shipping, shop-by-phone services, delivery, and complimentary gift-wrap. Having a sign isn't enough: train staff to offer and administer these services," Wold says.

- **8.** Is your lighting effectively and properly targeted? Enhance and highlight your merchandise with proper lighting. Use lights to create warmth. Fluorescent, track, and spot lights may be necessary to provide sufficient light to display merchandise.
- **9.** Are your signs selling your merchandise? Signage is an important component of visual merchandising, as it acts as a silent salesperson. Signs should be straightforward, easily read, and most important, professional.

"You can use signs to educate your customer," Wold says. "People value what they understand. Inform customers about particular authors or product lines with effective signage and knowledgeable staff, and make sure special merchandise has a sign that will help sell it."

10. Does your store packaging lead to a customer's repeat visit? All bags and boxes should have the store's logo on them. Also, remember that your business card can double as a gift tag. "To make a lasting impression, create a well-stocked, organized cash-wrap areas, free of clutter; it will send a message to customers that 'We're here, ready to serve you!'" Wold says.

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